

***Asclepias cryptoceras* S. Wats. ssp. *davisii* (Woods.)**

Woods

Davis' milkweed

Asclepiadaceae (Milkweed Family)

Status: State Potentially Extirpated

Rank: G4T?SH?

General Description: Adapted from Hitchcock et al. (1959): This herbaceous perennial grows from an enlarged, woody, often spindle-shaped root that is rather fleshy. The stems are 4 to 12 in. (10 to 30 cm) long and usually trailing or growing close to the ground without rooting adventitiously. The leaves are opposite, from obovate and rounded to oval, oblong or (the upper ones) ovate-lanceolate, $\frac{3}{4}$ to $2\frac{1}{4}$ in. (2 to 6 cm) long, mostly nearly as broad, usually coming to an abrupt point, fringed with conspicuous hairs along the margin, but otherwise usually hairless. The umbels are usually terminal, the central one 5- to 10-flowered, with a peduncle $\frac{3}{4}$ to $1\frac{1}{2}$ in. (2 to 4 cm) long and pedicels about equaling the peduncle. The lateral terminal umbels are sessile and fewer-flowered. The sepals are linear to lanceolate, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (5 to 9 mm) long, green or somewhat reddish-tinged, and more or less bearing dense, hairs in patches or tufts. The corolla is pale greenish-yellow, the lobes of which are lanceolate, $\frac{1}{4}$ to $\frac{1}{2}$ in. (8 to 12 mm) long, and often reddish-tinged on the back. The hoods are pinkish and $\frac{1}{4}$ in. (5 to 6 mm) long. The body of the hood is sac or pouch shaped and bilobed above, the lobes projecting into short, erect to slightly recurved teeth that slightly exceed the anthers and completely enclose the short horn. The follicles are ovoid, $1\frac{1}{4}$ to 2 in. (3 to 5 cm) long, and smooth.

Identification Tips: There are three species of *Asclepias* in the Pacific Northwest. Of these, *A. cryptoceras* most closely resembles *A. speciosa*. These two species can be distinguished by their horns, follicles, petal color, and most importantly their growth form. Horns are curved, pointed, hollow projections, which are part of the appendage between the corolla and the stamens that may either be petaloid or staminal in origin. The horns of *A. cryptoceras* have cleft hoods, its follicles are smooth, its petals are greenish-yellow, and the plant is hairless and greenish. The divergent horns of *A. speciosa* considerably exceed the stamens, its follicles are warty to spiny, its petals are pinkish to purple, and the plant is grayish and woolly. *A. cryptoceras* is a small and trailing plant, whereas *A. speciosa* is tall and grows upright.

Phenology: Flowers from April to June.

Range: This species occurs from Asotin County, Washington and Grant

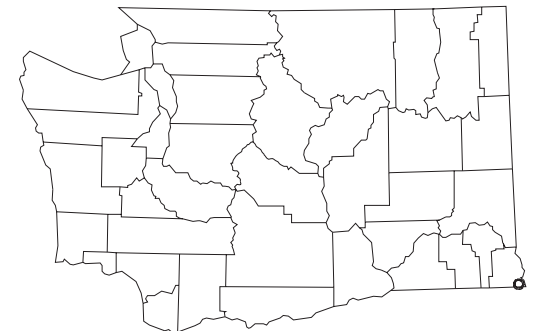
Asclepias cryptoceras* ssp. *davisii

Davis' milkweed



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Known distribution of
Asclepias cryptoceras
ssp. *davisii*
in Washington



● Current (1980+)
○ Historic (older than 1980)

Asclepias cryptoceras* ssp. *davisii

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Photo by Florence Caplow



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County, Oregon to Payette County, Idaho, south to California, and east to Colorado, Wyoming, and Arizona.

Habitat: *A. cryptoceras* prefers gravelly to heavy clay or basalt soil of hills and lower mountains. In Washington this species has been found on 80% bare gravelly clay slopes at 1300 ft (396 m) elevation near the mouth of the Grand Ronde River. Associated species include bluebunch wheatgrass (*Pseudoroegneria spicata*), Douglas' chaenactis (*Chaenactis douglasii*), tufted evening-primrose (*Oenothera caespitosa*), fuzzytongue penstemon (*Penstemon eriantherus* var. *eriantherus*), snow buckwheat (*Erigonum niveum*), silverleaf phacelia (*Phacelia hastata*), Cusick's milkvetch (*Astragalus cusickii*), Idaho hawksbeard (*Crepis bakeri* ssp. *idahoensis*), waha milkvetch (*Astragalus arthuri*), and Oregon twinpod (*Physaria oregana*).

Ecology: This taxon grows in dry areas on clay or basalt slopes.

State Status Comments: Known from one historical and one recent occurrence in Asotin County.

Inventory Needs: Inventory efforts should be continued. Suitable habitats throughout the southeastern portion of the state should be systematically surveyed for additional occurrences and updated information about these populations should be collected.

Threats and Management Concerns: Definite threats have not been identified for this taxon. However, its small range in Washington and the small number of known occurrences are major concerns. Any disturbance to the immediate habitat, such as grazing, development, and recreational activities, may constitute a threat.

References:

Hitchcock, C.L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, J.W. Thompson. 1959. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest Part 4: Ericaceae Through Campanulaceae*. University of Washington Press, Seattle, WA. 510 pp.